



# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

There are an estimated ten million new infections caused by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) each year in the US. Women are disproportionately affected by these diseases and their complications which include pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy, and tubal infertility. The 1997 Institute of Medicine report, "The Hidden Epidemic: Confronting Sexually Transmitted Diseases," emphasized the need to identify women at risk for STDs through population-based screening and to diagnose and treat infections earlier and more effectively. However, STD care has been shifting from traditional publicly funded clinics to private sector medical care where providers may not be as aware of the need for STD screening.

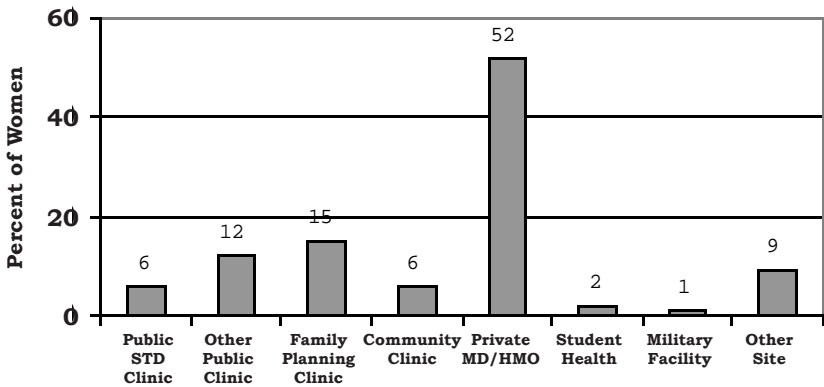
The 1997 California Women's Health Survey asked women aged 18–44 years questions about sexual behavior, STD history, and access to STD care. Because younger women are at particularly high risk for STDs, we have highlighted findings for that group.

- Only 11% of 18–24 year-olds and 4% of 25–44 year-olds had an STD check in the past year.
- 52% of all women who had an STD check had gone to a private doctor or HMO (40% of 18–24 year-olds and 62% of 25–44 year-olds).
- Only 14% of all women reported that their doctor discussed sexual activity during their last check-up; younger women were more likely to report having had this discussion than older women (23% vs. 11%).
- 44% of 18–24 year-olds did not use a condom during their last intercourse with a new or nonsteady partner.
- 1.9% of women reported an STD diagnosis in the past year (3.1% of 18–24 year-olds and 1.5% of 25–44 year-olds); about one-third of these were diagnoses of chlamydia.
- Half of the chlamydia diagnoses were in the 18–24 year age group.

## STDs AND ACCESS TO STD CARE

### Sexually Transmitted Disease Control Branch

Health Facility Types Used by Women Age 18–44 Years Who Had an STD Check in the Past Year; California, 1997



### Public Health Message:

Clinicians need to encourage STD checks and discuss sexual behavior and STD prevention with their clients, particularly with young women, who remain at high risk.

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